

Unit III director's first six months in office



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

I thought this month I would report on my first six months. I have to admit, there is definitely more work and time involved than I imagined. I was used to a crazy schedule with working various shifts and days at the casino. Many people think that the board members just attend a couple of meetings a month and some workshops. This could be the minimum that a director does but for the most part we have many meetings weekly with committees, elders' meetings, unit meetings, office hours, financials, grievance hearings, interviews, phone calls, emails, etc.

I think we have a very committed group of people to move the tribe in a very positive direc-

tion. The things that are disappointing to me are the games that get played, personal agendas and power struggles.

I will always do what needs to be done, knowing that I will never please everyone but for the most, a majority of the people. I am very proud to be representing my tribe. I am eager to learn and be involved and helpful as much as possible. I have a voice and am not afraid to let it be heard or ask questions when I need to.

I truly believe directors should have to work for the tribe before being eligible to run for office. Otherwise, you have so much to learn and cannot see things from an employee's perspective. I will continue to work hard and will not live in fear of not being re-elected because of decisions I make that don't benefit someone's agenda. I am not afraid to work and can work multiple jobs if need be.

I would like to thank all the cake bakers, game volunteers, food servers, craft teachers, setup and clean up volunteers for our Unit III Christmas Fun Fair. Thank you also to Keith Massaway's family and my family for all your help. Thanks to Chairperson Payment for his donation and prize recruiting. We had a great turnout with 163 kids. They each received a \$10

gift certificate for the local book store. I was excited to give out educational gifts while keeping the business local.

I have been voicing my concerns with the need to increase revenues in our casinos and am happy that we have finally set a date to spend a day discussing this. I am very passionate about the casinos and our businesses and we have so much riding on their success. I am also going to encourage my fellow directors to establish a priority list of things that need our immediate attention. I want to also establish a time line of bringing things back to the tribal members and team members of things that have been suspended.

One program that will be reinstated soon will be the youth scholarship fund that helps pay for driver's education, sporting equipment, registration fees, etc. This program paid up to \$150 per applicant. This is great timing since many of our schools are charging a "pay to play" fee and many youth are battling obesity. When the program is ready we will publish information in the tribal paper.

One issue I would like to address is the concern about our at-large members not feeling like they are part of the Sault Tribe. I guess I don't understand because

I have always lived in the seven-county service area. I have many family members who live outside the area and would love to offer services to every tribal member, but currently we cannot even offer all of our services to those who live in this area. Members can use tribal clinics in their area and are always welcome to visit our clinics.

The best analogy I can come up with is this: If my son leaves home, he is not here for family gatherings or daily events but he is still a part of this family. I cannot be there to help with his every need but can listen to him. If he chooses to move back home, I will be able to help him more.

We can't offer many services to our at-large members currently, but if they do come back home the door will be open. I am not trying to be rude, just realistic. I realize that not everyone can or wants to move back to Sault Tribe country. Some have been born and raised elsewhere, some left for better opportunities and some want to move back but can't for various reasons. I just want you to know that I can be your voice. You can always email me with your concerns, questions or ideas. It may appear that we care more about the members who live inside our units, but that is not the case. We just see and hear from

these members most often. I welcome your emails.

We are moving forward with our Tribal Action Plan Drug Advisory Task Force meetings. We will be meeting at the end of January and learning how to facilitate focus groups to be held in our communities in the near future. Addiction is such a huge problem and will not be stopped or cured overnight. We cannot cure the epidemic completely but have to have prevention, intervention and recovery programs in place and resources available at the time of need. We look forward to involvement from our communities to prevent any further deaths.

Members have been wondering why the new board members' pictures are not up yet. We did have our pictures taken in July by a photographer in the Sault but when we received the pictures in October, they were not to our satisfaction. Many of us had so much makeup we looked like we were ready for the morgue. We returned the photos with a letter of refusal of payment. We are going to be taking new pictures elsewhere.

As always, feel free to contact me at bsorenson@saulttribe.net, (906) 643-2123 (office) or 430-0536 (cell).